



Stories from the Mountain Top

Mission work in Bolivia

By: Michael Keyse, General Board of Global Missions Missionary

Romans: 10:15 “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

Meeting on top the mountain

Working here in Bolivia is not what we think of as the normal way of doing things. In January of 2007 I called ahead to the district superintendent of the Potosi District. I needed to have a meeting with him and the leaders of the church to prepare for the North Carolina team coming to continue their work on the new church, La Nueva Semilla Minera. We decided on a time of 2:00pm on Saturday and he would contact the leaders of the church to be there also.

Well I arrived early and found the treasurer, who is the wife of one the leaders of the church, Augustina. We sat and talked for awhile and discussed some of the things we needed to work on in preparation for the team coming in two weeks. Her son, Marcos, also joined us shortly after my arrival. Marcos had been there working side-by-side with all of the groups. Shortly before 2:00 the district superintendent called Augustina on her cell phone and said he could not make the meeting. He was stuck in La Paz which is a 10 hour bus ride away. He could not get a bus ticket because of the celebration of Carnival in Oruro, which is between La Paz and Potosi. This is a major event in Oruro. So I said, “OK, where is

Maximo, your husband?” She replied, “Oh, he is working in the mine and won’t be down until at least 4:00.” Potosi was one of the richest silver finds in the world and continues to be a major mining area.

“OK,” I said. “What about the other leaders?” So she called some of them and they were all working, too. Thinking for a minute I asked her and her son, who is 17 years old and also works in the mines, if we could find Maximo. I was on a tight schedule as most Americans are and needed to go to Sucre that afternoon for another meeting. They thought for a minute and decided we could probably find him if we went up to the head of the mine. So we all got in my jeep and drove up the mountain, the Cerro Rico, (The Rich Mountain), where most of the mining is done. This is no easy task being there is no paved roads. The only roads are those built just big enough to move materials down the mountain from individual mine shafts. There, Maximo had just come out of the mine for a break. So we had a meeting on the side of the mountain at the entrance to the mine shaft. There we worked out the details of what materials to buy and to prepare for the team that was coming.



Cerro Rico (the rich mountain) in the background and the church La Nueva Semilla Minera

There just some things that you have to do to get the job done that is not in the job description when you sign on, including having a meeting at the mine. This qualifies as was one of them. But to me there is nothing more rewarding than going to these remote places and working with these people of Bolivia. They have rewarded me in ways that I could never imagined. I can not express how important it is to visit in the homes of these poverty stricken people of Bolivia and share their lives and existence. Whether it is sharing a meal or a conversation, this gives them some hope that their lives are important and meaningful.

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HOW TO SUPPORT

ADVANCE PROJECTS IN BOLIVIA

- Individual projects can be found at: www.advancinghope.org
- You can contact me directly to get more information about a project: makeyse@cotas.com.bo
- To support Michael Keyse Salary: Advance # 3019613
- To support the promotions and VIM office expenses: Advance #3020468
- To support church construction: Advance #09735N
- To support medical needs or the churches clinic : Advance # 08767A

Commissioning day March 11, 2008



I thank God every day for this opportunity to serve Him in this country called Bolivia.

Most of you know me well and some of you have only meet me briefly when you were here in Bolivia on a building or medical team.

I came to Bolivia in 2001 on VIM team to work in Cochabamba. In 2006 I came to Bolivia as full time volunteer, through the South Eastern Jurisdiction, as a full time volunteer to assist Dakin Cook with the thought, "Well, I'll give this a year and see what happens." I was not here long and we were already talking about what would happen next year. God had lead me here and now was in complete control. He had opened the door for me to

come as a volunteer and then to apply to GBGM as a full missionary.

As we all do I started questioning if it would really happen or if this was what I was to do, but as always God knew when the time was right. Then mid December 2007 GBGM called me for an interview and then to come to NY in February for training.

The four weeks I spent in training was one of the most spiritual and uplifting experiences I have ever had because of sharing with the others in training from all over the world. I will never forget the bond we all formed with each other.

Sharing commissioning day with my brothers and sisters in Christ is a day that will be close

to my heart. In those weeks we shared our hopes and our fears. Most of us were leaving our homes and our families to follow where God was leading us. Then came our day of commissioning. It was an exciting day for all of us, but I will never forget the moment that I was personally commissioned. I knelt in front of Bishop Martin as he and others all laid their hands on me. I have felt God's presence and guidance during this journey. With all the excitement of the day and the moment there was truly a calm and peace that came over me in that moment. I felt as if it were God's hands on my head and the Holy Spirit was surrounding me. This is what I carry with me every day as I travel doing the work God has lead me to do in Bolivia.

Saving a life

Why do we have building teams? Are they only to build buildings? I think they are more that for just building a building, as one team in Potosi found out. Three years ago they heard that one of the members of the church they were working on, was still having problems with her leg. It was the same leg that was bothering her the year before. "Had she been to the doctor?" they asked. Yes, but she was not sure what the

problem was. She needed a specialist and there was not one in Potosi. She would have to travel to Cochabamba and did not have money for the travel and did not want to leave her four children. So the team voted to see what they could do to help her with travel expenses and what the diagnosis would be. With the help of the district coordinator who arranged the travel and the appointments at the hospital, they found

out that she had a bone infection in her right leg.

The team agreed to help with her expenses. She had the operation needed and then spent 6 weeks in the hospital. She has now fully recovered and is alive to take care of her four small children.

Some times being in the right place can save a life. Being part of a building team may be that right place and time.

VIM Teams to Bolivia

VIM in Bolivia are on the rise. This year I have had 37 teams on my schedule. Of the 37 teams 25 were for construction, 6 were medical and 6 were Engineers Without Borders. This is the most teams ever scheduled in one year. Due to the increase in the number of teams my work has increased also. Not counting the fact that we have had two missionaries in the Eastern district retire. With the increase in teams and the absence of missionaries, my travel has also doubled.

We are having an increasing number of youth coming on the teams. This interaction of the youth with the youth of Bolivia is inspiring to both groups. I

feel they are the key to the Methodist Church if we are to grow in the future. They are also the key to solving the problems that are here in Bolivia. The solution to the political problems and the poverty that has gripped this country.

My experience with the youth here is that they have a strong desire to help the poverty stricken people and improve the quality of life here in Bolivia. This is where the future lies for Bolivia and the US, it's in its youth.

Help sponsor a youth or a youth group on a VIM team to Bolivia or some other country today.

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